

International Working Group  
on Data Protection  
in Telecommunications

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**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

**Privacy and Data Protection Issues  
with regard to the WHOIS Directory and ICANN**

The International Working Group on Data Protection in Telecommunications (so-called Berlin Group), chaired by the Berlin Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Maja Smoltczyk, has adopted a **Working Paper on Privacy and Data Protection Issues with Regard to Registrant data and the WHOIS Directory at ICANN** at its 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting in Paris (France) on 27 and 28 November 2017.

ICANN stands for Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. This organisation coordinates the assignment of names and addresses on the Internet to ensure that each website address is unique. According to the regulations of ICANN, when registering websites, personal data of registrants are published in the WHOIS, the directory of all website owners worldwide. The directory is an unlimited and freely searchable database. The data published therein are accessed by a wide range of different stakeholders for advertising, market research, legal protection, consumer protection, law enforcement and other purposes.

The Berlin Group has been dealing with the resulting data protection issues for years and has summarized them in the recently published Working Paper. In particular, the Berlin Group recommends to assess the necessity for publication of data against the original purpose of the WHOIS directory to provide contact data for primarily technical problems. In addition, the Working Group has formulated more concrete recommendations for ICANN as to where there is an urgent need for improvement from a data protection point of view.

The Working Paper is available for download at <http://www.berlin-privacy-group.org>

**About the International Working Group on Data Protection in Telecommunications (“Berlin Group”)**

The International Working Group on Data Protection in Telecommunications (IWGDPT, a.k.a. “Berlin Group”) includes representatives from Data Protection Authorities and international organisations dealing with privacy matters from all over the world. It was founded in 1983 in the framework of the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners at the initiative of the Berlin Commissioner for Data Protection, who has since then been chairing the Group. The Group has adopted numerous recommendations (“Common Positions” and “Working Papers”) aimed at improving the protection of privacy in telecommunications. Since the beginning of the 90s the Group has focused particularly on the protection of privacy on the Internet.

More information about the Work of the Group and the documents adopted by the Group are available for download on the website of the Group at <http://www.berlin-privacy-group.org>.

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The Working Group has been initiated by Data Protection Commissioners from different countries in order to improve privacy and data protection in telecommunications and media